

Peake, Mayor.

*Martis septimo die Decembris, 1686.
Annóque Regni Regis Jacobi Secundi,
Angliæ, &c. secundo.*

THIS Court doth desire Dr. *Hickman*
to print his Sermon preached at the
Guild-hall Chapel, on Sunday, the 21st of
November, last, before the Lord Mayor and
Aldermen.

Wagstaffe.

IMPRIMATUR,

*Jan. 13.
1686.*

*Hen. Maurice, Reverendissimo
in Christo P. D. Wilhelmo
Archiep. Cant. à Sacris.*

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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before

The Right Honourable

T H E

Lord Mayor

And COURT of

A L D E R M E N,

A T

The Guild-hall Chapel, Nov. 21. 1686.

By Charles Hickman, D.D. Stud. of Christ-Church, Oxon.
and Chaplain to the Right Honourable Laurence, Earl of
Rochester.

L O N D O N,

Printed by M. Flesher, for Charles Brome, at the Gun
at the West-end of Saint Paul's. 1687.

A
SERMON

The Right Honourable

Lord Mayor

ALDERMEN

By Charles Hulse, D.D. and of the Holy Trinity, Oxford,
and Chaplain to the Right Honourable Admirals, Earl of
Portland.

LONDON
Printed by W. Lintell, for Charles Hulse, at the
at the West end of Saint Paul's Church.

T O
The Right Honourable
Sir John Peake,
LORD MAYOR,
AND THE
COURT of ALDERMEN
OF
The CITY of LONDON.

My Lord,

I Must neither question your Lordship's judgment, nor dispute your commands; and that's the onely apology I can make for publishing this Discourse: but how far it may

The Epistle Dedicatory.

avail me, depends purely upon the good nature of my Readers, who may, I confess, easily return that blame upon my self, which I here endeavour to transfer upon your Lordship. For the pretended Modesty of Good Writers has so anticipated all pleas which can be offer'd by the Bad, to palliate their imperfections, that we have not so much as a Fig-leaf left to cover our real shame, but what they, by unnecessary and frequent using, have render'd transparent and ineffectual. And therefore this Sermon, rude and misshapen as it is, had been sent out naked into the World, without any other Covert but your Lordship's Order, did not the respect I bear to your Court oblige me, in this Dedication, to beg your pardon for the slightness of the performance, instead of making an insignificant excuse for the publication of it. I confess my Presumption in giving so plain, though hearty an entertainment, to so
solemn

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*Solemn and judicious an Assembly, was a fault,
which I hope my obedience now may partly
expiate; whereby I have given a publick te-
stimony, how intirely I submit my own judg-
ment and reputation too to your Lordship's
commands, and have, though with regret,
made this dangerous essay to shew my self,*

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most Obedient and

most Humble Servant,

Charles Hickman.

PROV.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Joseph and Judah, as I have said, was a family
which I hope my obedience now may partly
repay; whereby I have given a goodly
and my own family I submit my own
heart and reputation to your Lordship's
commands, and have, though with regret,
made this dangerous effort to face my self.

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most Obedient and

most Humble Servant

Charles Hickman.

PROV.

PROV. XXX. 8, 9.

*Remove far from me vanity and lies, give
me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with
food convenient for me:*

*Left I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is
the Lord? or, lest I be poor and steal, and
take the Name of my God in vain.*

SINCE the Love of Riches has so universally overspread the world, that neither Law nor Reason can restrain it, but like a deluge it bears down all bounds of Justice and Religion too: since covetous desires are so fatally rooted in the minds of men, that they will prefer a Possession upon Earth before a Reversion in Heaven; and value both themselves and others, not for the accomplishments of Virtue, and perfections of the Soul, but according to the extent of their Lands, and the plenty of their Stores; it will not be unreasonable, and perhaps not unprofitable, to give some directions how to behave our selves in the purchase and enjoyment of these Goods, as we find them laid down in the words of my Text. Where we may observe,

BEEN THAT

I. That both Poverty and Riches are the Gift of God; otherwise the Wife-man needed not to have prayed, *Give me neither poverty nor riches*, if it had been in his own power to make the choice.

II. That neither Poverty nor Riches are such Gifts for which a wife man would pray; because each of these conditions have their dangers and inconveniences annex to them; as,

1. *Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* which is the common effect of Riches; or,

2. *Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain*, which is too often the effect of Want.

III. That the way to remove these inconveniences, is to remove far from us vanity and lies, and then we may so moderate our selves in each of these estates, as to be humble before God in the midst of our abundance, and thankfull to him in our distress.

IV. That notwithstanding this, yet the safest, and consequently the most desirable course of life, is a middle state between Poverty and Riches; and that it is for the interest as well as for the ease of man, that God would neither let us want nor abound, but only feed us with food convenient for us.

And first, That both Poverty and Riches are the Gift of God. Whosoever rationally conceives the being of a God, must needs believe that our beings are depen-

dependent upon him, and from him alone we must expect rewards and punishments: and since there is a sort of men whom the expectations of another life cannot affect, therefore it was necessary, that for the restraining of their lusts, and securing the government of the world, God should reserve to himself the sole disposal of these earthly goods, wherein they place their onely happiness.

And this is a truth so manifest, that it is confess'd in the practice and experience of the worst of men; for which of them would not grow rich, if it were in the power of man to bring his own designs to pass; or would content himself with a mean contemptible Estate, if humane means could prevent it: Thus whilst they blaspheme the Providence of God, they confess his power; and when the impatient Wife of *Job* bad him in the midst of his poverty, *curse God and die*, she gave as great a demonstration, that both our good and evil things proceed from him, as *Job* himself could doe in saying, *the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away*. This Proposition therefore being suppos'd in my Text, and confess'd by the greatest enemies of Religion, I shall take it for fully granted; and proceed to the

Second thing propos'd; that though both Poverty and Riches are the Gift of God, and he often ordereth both for our good, yet neither of them are such gifts for which a wise man would pray: For the true happiness of the Soul consisteth in a state of rest, but both these conditions are equally subject to dangers and troubles. Riches incline a man to Pride and

Poverty to Malice; Riches make us the Subject of mens Envy, and Poverty of their Contempt: Abundance often begets Presumption; and Want is the Mother of Despair; Plenty produces Forgetfulness, and Extremity leads us to Discontent. Riches create a confidence in us, and hurry us into a restless Ocean of trouble, where we are expos'd to the fury of the Winds, and toss'd by every Wave; whilst Poverty casts us back again to the Shore, and puts us in danger of being split upon the Coast. Thus when *Israel* sojourn'd in the Wilderness, they *murmured against the Lord and his servant Moses*; and yet when they fed upon the plenty of Milk and Honey, then *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked*. Unhappy Man! that no estate or condition can reconcile us to our present Fortunes, but the want of our desires breeds murmurings in us; and the very enjoyment of them yields us no satisfaction. We have learnt, just contrary to *St. Paul*, in whatsoever state we are therewith to be discontent; we neither know how to be abas'd nor how to abound; but when we are hungry we repine at God, and when we are full we are a burthen to our selves.

'Tis strange, that the minds of Men should so servilely depend upon this World, as not to maintain a steady course for one moment, but be bias'd by every petty chance, and chang'd by every turn of Fortune. This is too evident a sign, that our Souls have no communication with Heaven, where all things continue fix'd and settled; no dependence upon God, who is one and the same for ever; since we put such confidence in these outward worldly goods, that with them our minds are so exalted, and without them so much debas'd.

And

And yet we find by sad experience, that few men can bear up against the strokes of fortune, though they are inflicted by the hand of God: But when Poverty comes upon them, they think themselves oppress'd: as if they were to prescribe to the Almighty in the dispensation of his blessings, and their own desires were the onely measures of their right: without considering their own sins, as the cause of their calamities; or their own amendment, as the end thereof; they wrongfully accuse both God and Man, as the Authours and Instruments of that unhappiness which they owe chiefly to themselves. Sometimes they look upon their Neighbour's plenty as the occasion of their distress; and so steal from them, to supply their own wants: thus starving their Conscience to relieve their Carcase, and sacrificing their Religion to the Belly, their God. Sometimes they imagine the superfluity of another's fortune is a reproach to the penury of theirs; with envy they behold the affluence and ease of the rich; and not content with the emptiness of their bodies, they *put leanness withall in to their Souls*. Thus to an evil eye all Objects are offensive, and even the goodness of God it self increases the offence. Then they repine at Heaven for the unequal distribution of its gifts, curse the Lord in their hearts, though they die for it; and doe even worse than *take the name of their God in vain*.

With very good reason therefore did the Wise-man in my Text pray, *give me not poverty*. And certainly every wise man alive will join prayers with him, lest shame, contempt and want, the onely attendants

tendents of that uncomfortable state, should tempt us to mistrust the assistance of our God, and so betray us, through the frailty of our flesh, to relieve our selves by wicked means.

And therefore no prudent, no religious man, can make real poverty his choice. For though 'tis possible he may stem the tide of adversity, and bear up gloriously against all its waves; yet 'tis possible too that he may be carry'd away with the stream, and faint under the temptation and the conflict. Though, as the Devil truly said, a man may fall from the pinnacle of a Temple without dashing his foot against a stone; yet the wisest man that ever liv'd, thought this no warrant for him to try the experiment: he is happy that outlives the fall, but he that is wise avoids the danger. 'Tis sufficient for us that God does not lead us into temptation; why then should we voluntarily tempt the Lord our God?

And the same reason holds also in the other extreme. For riches too have their precipices, as well as poverty, and therefore are equally to be avoided. Prosperity has its dangerous trials, and is expos'd to manifold temptations, and 'tis ill trusting to our own virtue, when we have put our selves into the midst of all the opportunities of vice.

On one hand the temptations of the world beset us: and if that smiles upon us, we are too apt to be flatter'd and pleas'd our selves. 'Tis natural for a man to rejoice in the works of his own hands; and when he has dedicated his youth to worldly cares, and courted Mam-

Mammon in his riper years, he will adore it in his old age, and at length it will become his God. Here he places all his confidence : and to convince us that covetousness is truly idolatry, like the Heathen Idolater, he bows down to an image of his own making, he worships it, and prays to it, and says, deliver me, for thou art my God.

On the other hand our riches expose us to the assaults of the *Flesh*, which always gains ground upon us when we are full. And therefore the Apostle exhorts us not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. 'Tis this plenty that nourishes us in our vice, and feeds us in our lusts ; it adds fuel to the flame within us ; and whilst we yield a constant supply to our greedy desires, the fire never goeth out. Fulness inclines us to ease and luxury, luxury begets sin, and sin brings us to death. Thus we multiply our transgressions together with our stores ; and he that, with *Solomon*, will take occasion from his riches, to prove the mirth, the pleasures and follies of sense, like him also will find his wisdom overborn by his vice, and so come at last to deny his God.

For when the vanities of the *World*, and the lusts of the *Flesh* have taken possession of the heart of man, then comes the *Devil* and finds an easie conquest. He that denies the providence of God, by trusting in his own strength, and denies the power of God, by following his own devices ; has no way left to vindicate his honour, and quiet his conscience, but by denying the very being of God, and saying with *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice ?* Thus pro-

proceeding by degrees from mistrust to disobedience, and from disobedience to infidelity, the foolish man delivers himself up to the power of Satan, and renounces the living God. Then he disclaims the benefit of his creation; and rather than acknowledge a power above him, will absurdly impute his being to chance. He denies the goodness of God in his constant preservation; and rather than give God the glory and thanks, ascribes all his happiness to the works of his own hands. He denies the justice of God in his judgments; afflictions, diseases and death, he looks upon as the necessities of his nature, and not the punishment of his sins. So perverse is he in all his ways, that *Moses and the Prophets* cannot reclaim him; nothing but *one from the dead* is a demonstration that can please a riotous sinner, and even that cannot convince him.

And yet can his riches redeem him from death, or from the terrors after death? though in the hardness of his heart he deny'd the power of God whilst he lived, yet at length he must feel his vengeance, and the fury of the Lord will convince his error. *Oh Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, and hath prosperity in all things!* how will he lament the fatal change of his estate, when his jollity shall be turn'd into mourning, and his pleasure into gnashing of teeth! When instead of purple, he shall be cloath'd with ashes; and all the delicacies which he riotously devour'd in his life, he would now exchange for one drop of water to cool his tongue. When the voice of Musick, which us'd to charm his ears, shall be put to silence for ever

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in the grave, and the howlings of accursed Spirits shall supply their place. The Flatterers, which partook of his good things, and basely extoll'd his folly, shall now partake of his misery too, and without any dissimulation, lament his and their own iniquity. And because they *made a mock of sin, and laugh'd at the obedience of the righteous*, God also will *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh*. Therefore give us not riches, *lest we be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* lest the Lord also should deny us in the day of our trouble; and say, *depart from me ye workers of wickedness, I know you not.*

I would not here be thought to inveigh against the Rich, but onely to reprove the folly and danger of those who put their trust in riches. For since 'tis the goodness of God that gives us all things *plenteously to enjoy*; he can sanctify his gifts, and by his grace can, notwithstanding these inconveniences, turn them to our advantage. Which was the

Third thing propos'd, that if we remove far from us vanity and lies, all false opinions and vain conceits of the things of this World, we may then so moderate our selves in either of the extremes of fortune, as to be humble before God in the midst of our abundance, and thankfull even in our distress.

'Tis the ignorance of our understandings that depraves our wills, and a false estimate of things that makes us first chuse amiss, and then abuse our choice. Had we but so much Christian philosophy, as to discern

cern the true nature and import of earthly things, and to distinguish rightly between good and evil, we could not be so fatally betray'd by specious shews, to forsake our real and substantial happiness. How absurd is it to pass a judgment upon a man onely by his outside, and value him according to the stamp which his garments, and trifies set upon him? *is not the body more than raiment*, says our Saviour? and yet the Body it self is but the covering of the man, the meanest, and basest part of his nature; and he is no more to be valued by the health, strength or splendour thereof, than a Jewel is by the Cabinet that contains it, or Gold by the Chest wherein 'tis hid. And if the Body it self be of so little esteem, in comparison of the Mind, and those divine excellencies therein, which intitle it to the image of God; how much more inconsiderable are riches, which serve onely for ornaments of the Body, and to cloath that part which covers us?

Yet such is the folly and vanity of man, that he makes this part his chief business and delight: for this it is that *he rises up early, and so late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness*; that his riches may be seen of men, and dazle the eyes of ignorant people: in a most gross absurdity he neglects his Soul, to take care for his Body; and then neglects his Body too, and impairs the health thereof, to provide the unnecessary ornaments of its outside. Thus with exquisite industry and diligence he cloaths a Carcase: and if he can but paint and adorn his Sepulchre, he cares not though all be stench and rottenness within. And who can chuse but condemn his conduct, who resolves to beautify his Chamber, though he starves his Guest?

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Therefore to restore us to a right understanding, and to remove this vanity, which depraves our judgment, corrupts our nature, and spoils us of our Religion too, let us consider

1. The uncertainty of riches; and the folly of those who build their happiness upon so sandy a foundation. Though the whole World be an Exchange, and nothing there continues in one stay, yet of all that we see and admire therein, nothing is so uncertain as our Riches: *here the moth and rust do corrupt;* and what these accidents of nature spare, *the thieves break through and steal.* And though our care and vigilance may protect and guard us from the violence of an open enemy, yet there is no fence against the treachery of a false familiar friend. He that can unlock our bosom, and dive into the treasures of our heart; will find an easy access to our coffers; and prevail more by the flattering insinuations of his craft, than the Robber can do by open force. The Laws themselves, which were design'd for our defence, by the contrivance of evil men often prove our destruction; and we meet with a dagger where we expected to find a shield. How often have we seen the hand of God, in a raging flame, reduce whole Families from the height of pride to the extremity of want; and in one minute bury the labours of divers ages? The Earth it self sometimes opens her womb, and swallows up the fruits of the Field; and the waves of the Sea, when they arise, sweep away the treasures of the Earth. Sometimes God arms the Air it self with poison; and blasts the hopes of a promising Spring.

Thus all the Elements in their courses fight against us; and what they spare, the more unmercifull sword of Man cuts off, and lays waste our dwelling place. And is it for this that we forget God? shall we forsake *the Lord our strength, our rock of defence and mighty deliverer*, to put our trust in such fading transitory hopes? shall we commit our ease and quietness to the Seas and Winds, and entrust our dearest treasures with the Flatterer and the Thief? We must indeed submit to the power of God; and whensoever he pleases, he can bring distress and anguish upon us: but must we put our happiness also into the hands of wicked and deceitfull Man; shall we place all our glory in that which Moths and Caterpillars devour, and make our selves subject to the mean, contemptible vermin of the Earth? surely God design'd some nobler, and more solid delights, to entertain our thoughts withall; and did not bestow a divine nature upon us, to be thrown away upon the sordid dregs of the Earth, and be made the sport of every Creature.

But, though this uncertainty of riches were removed, and our possessions were established unto us for ever; yet we must consider, how unprofitable they are of themselves, and how little they advance either the honour or the happiness of Man: the wisest and richest of Kings assures us, that *riches profit not in the day of wrath*. Whole mines of treasures cannot defend us from the torments of a disease; nor the multitude of Attendants affright from us the terrors of death: they onely serve to soften and effeminate our hearts against the day of adversity, and make

us unable to bear those afflictions which they themselves bring upon us. The aching of the Head may be caus'd, but cannot be cur'd by all the Balms and Spices of the East, nor the rottenness of Bones be remov'd with millions of Gold and Silver: but the Richest must die as well as the Poor and Needy, and their dear Possessions can neither preserve them in this World, nor follow them into the next.

Nay, they not onely *die*, but *live like other men*. Of all the perplexities that attend humane Life, they have their share, and perhaps the greatest too: though all the World should applaud their Happiness, and flatter their Prosperity, yet they cannot flatter themselves out of those Troubles, that interrupt their Enjoyments, and disturb their very Rest. He that increases Riches increases Sorrow, and whosoever thinks to establish his Happiness upon the Honours of the World, and the multitude of Dependents, will find at last, just contrary to his expectations, that they are become his Idol, and he is their Prey.

And what is all this to the Happiness of the Mind, which requires a fix'd and substantial good, that depends not upon the accidental Crosses of this World, nor the Humours of a giddy People: a Happiness, which, like the Soul it self, is alway active and divine, full and satisfactory, though it be never seen.

The Soul, which can enjoy all happiness and pleasure within its own bounds, and needs no witnesses of its greatness, but onely God and it self, disdains

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to submit to the Dunghill for its delight, and to appeal to the ignorant multitude for its applause; it fixes it self upon everlasting pleasures, and places its habitation upon that only Rock which can never be remov'd; Verue and Goodness, Justice and Truth are the Pillars that support it, and Mercy and Peace are its eternal Ornaments; no Storms nor Tempests can shake its Foundation, and no malignant Blasts can deface its Beauty, but 'tis all solid and strong without, and all glorious within.

Thus the Wise man desires nothing but what the Grace of God has put into his own power to accomplish; and look whatsoever this Man doeth it shall prosper. He numbers his Treasures by his Good works, which no man can take from him; and the Vertues and Excellencies of his Mind are above Gold and precious Stones. These are his Heavenly Possessions, which daily employ his thoughts, and improve his Piety, to the honour of God, and the comfort of his Soul. As for all other goods, he looks upon them as unnecessary ornaments of his Life, bestow'd upon him not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of others. He considers thereby that God has made him his Steward, to minister unto the Poor; and therefore what God with a bountifull hand has dealt to him, he bountifullly deals abroad; and having provided for the Necessaries of his Life and State, he knows no other use of the Superfluities, but to dispense them unto those that want. Thus with a generous Mind he promotes a publick Good, and like God himself rejoices in that joy which he creates in others.

And when he has gain'd this conquest of the World, and remov'd the vanity thereof far from him, then is he fit to be entrusted with Riches, without danger of misemploying them to encourage Vice, or concealing them to defraud his Vertue. If he finds any real profit or advantage by being Rich, he considers that 'tis the goodness of God to make him so, and therefore he behaves himself thankfully towards the Giver of his good Gifts, and provokes him not to Anger by abusing of his Mercy. He is so far from denying God in his Prosperity, that he makes this very thing an argument for his Religion, and a help to his Devotion.

The Devil himself could say, *does Job serve God for nought? hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house? thou hast blessed the works of his hands, and his substance is encreased in the Land.* And if God has been bountifull unto us, cannot we remember whose Hand it is that guards us, whose Blessing it is that maketh rich? The Earth it self will upbraid our ingratitude, for she in return for the Showrs and Dewes of Heaven, sends forth the Fruits of the Field for Sacrifice, and answers the Labours and the Toils of the Husbandman by a plentifull increase; and can we be more senseless than the Earth it self, or more unrighteous than the Devil? Shall we therefore be unmindfull of God, because he remembers us? Surely if we grow rich, we will not behave our selves frowardly in thy sight: if we be full, we will not deny thee, and say, *Who is the Lord?* but rather we will magnifie thy Name, and say, *Lord, what is man, that thou art*

art mindfull of him, or the son of man that thou hast
such respect unto him?

And now it must be confes'd that it is truly an argument of a noble Spirit to be above the frowns of Fortune, but 'tis much more difficult and more glorious too to be above its smiles; to be exalted above the alluring pleasures of Earth, and to despise that very affluence which we enjoy; and what the Philosopher said of a valiant Man in his sufferings, is much more applicable to the vertuous Man in his enjoyments, that a Soul thus qualified and thus endowed, is a spectacle on which God himself may look with pleasure. Here we may see and admire in Man the most lively image and representation of his great Creatour. This is truly to command the World, without being commanded or sway'd by any Creature; to possess and enjoy the Blessings of Heaven and Earth, with clean Hands and an untainted Heart, is to be like *Adam* in his Paradise, invested at once with innocence and glory.

But, 2. Having learnt to demean our selves with Humility and Moderation in a plentiful Estate, we shall with ease overcome the Temptations of Poverty, and learn Patience and Thankfulness in the time of need. Why should we repine for want of a thing of nought, and disquiet our selves for that which is lighter than vanity it self? Why should we murmur at that state which God judges fittest for us? If it had seem'd good unto him, he could have enlarg'd our Possessions, and given us plenty with the overflowing of our Cup; for Riches are his Gifts, and his
Bounty

Bounty like the Wind bloweth where it listeth: there is no restraint unto the Lord, but he can raise the humble from the Dust, and set him among the Princes of the People. Therefore despair not, *neither be thou afraid though one be made rich, and though the glory of his house be increased;* for the same God disposeth of both him and thee; in his good time he can promote thee also to a state of plenty, or deliver thee from distress, by bringing thee to the place of rest; where there shall be no distinction between the Dust of the Rich and Poor, neither his Pomp shall attend him, nor thy Poverty haunt thee to the Grave. *O Death, how acceptable is thy sentence unto the needy, when all our cares shall be laid aside in the dust, and the remembrance of our sorrows shall be blotted out.* This is the birth-day of joy and pleasure unto those that mourn, and 'tis not the least advantage of Poverty, that it puts us in mind of our latter end; and makes us in love with that state which must of necessity happen to us,

And as for the Burthen of Want it self, how easie is it to a Man that has *remov'd far from him vanity, and lies?* 'tis the disappointment that makes it troublesome to the vain designing Man, who promis'd himself great and glorious advantages of his Wealth; but to the humble 'tis welcome, as being the Message of Heaven, and he makes no reply, but *I am thy servant, be it unto me according to thy will, O God!* Therefore he studies to conform himself to the pleasure of the Almighty, and if he cannot raise his Fortunes up to his Mind, yet he will certainly level his Mind to his present Fortune. If God has not allow'd

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him,

him so large a Field, wherein to exercise his Gifts; he will make the best use of his narrow confin'd estate, and by the prudent management of his single Talent, he shall receive his reward with those on whom ten Talents were bestow'd. For God has given every one the means to grow happy, though not the opportunity of growing rich. The Honesty and Industry, the Patience and Contentment of the poor Man, are as acceptable Vertues unto God, as the Bounty and Charity, the Humility and Thankfulness of Kings and Princes.

And now, *Who shall separate the poor Man from the love of God?* shall Tribulation and Anguish? No certainly, for this is the Gift of God unto him for good, to exercise his Patience and recommend his Vertues. Shall Poverty and Distress? this is a Gospel promise, and not to be rejected by any that profess an esteem for the Doctrine of Christ, and the example which he has set before us. Shall shame and contempt? this indeed is the greatest burthen of Poverty, and all but this a prudent Heathen boasted that he could endure; but even this does not exceed a Christians strength; for either we have, or should have learnt, from St. Paul, *to approve our selves in all things as the servants of God, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, by honour and dishonour, by good report and evil report.*

And if neither the Anguish, Distress nor Shame of Poverty, can make this condition unsupportable to an humble, faithfull Believer, he will never fly to unlawful means for his redress, but rather perish in his
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necessities than *steal*, or *take the name of his God in vain*. Death comes alike both to the rich Man and the poor; and *since 'tis appointed for all men once to die*, what matter is it to the Body, whether it be by Hunger or a Surfeit? but for our Souls sake, 'tis not onely more meritorious, but more glorious too, to depart this Life for want of the necessary supports thereof, than either to cram our selves to Death by the superfluities of Riches, or to prolong our Life, and advance our Fortunes by impious and dishonourable means.

If we can bear our Poverty with content, and freely enjoy the exercise of our Vertue and Religion; what greater advantages can we desire by being rich? Who would exchange an honest and vertuous, though mean Estate, for a turbulent, dangerous and unprofitable greatness? Who would not rather chuse to be a *door-keeper in the house of God* than to dwell in the *Tents*, or feast in the *Palaces of ungodliness*. And if we can frame our Minds to this vertuous compliance with our Fortunes, then is Poverty truly the Gift of God, and a real Blessing. But if we find our selves uneasy and groaning under the burthen of our Want, if we murmur against God, and repine at the Plenty of others; then indeed is Poverty a Curse, but 'tis a Curse of our own making. 'Tis the punishment of our sins, and the hand of God upon us for our Reformation. Therefore we must *still give him thanks, for he is still the help of our countenance, and our God*. He bringeth Good out of this Evil, and though the Clouds of Adversity should seem to shut us out from his presence, yet he visits us when we are in the darkeſt

Regions of despair. *If we down into Hell, he is there also*; he still retains a peculiar title to our gratitude; and in the Wiseman's words, though I should be *poor*, yet still he is *my God*, and *I will not take the name of my God in vain.*

But lastly, Though it be possible to escape the temptations of Riches, and overcome the perplexities of Want: yet still the safest and most desirable course of life, is a middle state between Poverty and Riches. *Give me neither poverty nor riches*, says the Wise-man, *but feed me with food convenient for me.* He would not willingly either bring a burthen upon himself, by multiplying Riches to provide for other men; nor be himself a burthen unto others by seeking a support from their hands. He would neither have his thoughts rack'd and distracted for want of necessary food; nor yet slacken'd and dull'd for want of a convenient employment: but he would chuse such a condition of life, as should qualify him for the performance of his duty both towards God and Man; and divide his time between the cares of this World and the next. Such an Estate as should oblige him to work with his hands the things for his good; and yet afford him time and opportunity to pay his duty unto God, and beg his blessing upon the works of his hands: that the favour and countenance of God may encourage him in his Calling, and a faithfull diligence in his Calling may enliven his Devotion, and increase the sense of his gratitude unto God.

Thus

Thus while some labour under the burthen of Riches and Honours, and scarce enjoy the fruits of either; whilst others are oppressed with want, and with difficulty bear up and maintain their vertue against the tide of adversity: he alone enjoys himself in a peacefull calm. And as God has plac'd him above the contempt of the Rich, and below the envy of the poor, so he neither envies the Riches of the one, nor contemns the Poverty of the other. *Having food and raiment he is therewith content*; and there is nothing in the World which he wants, because there is nothing more which he desires. As he places not his happiness in the possession of Riches, so neither does he disquiet himself for their loss: but with chearfulness he submits to the will of God; and undergoes the change of his Estate, with the same indifference as he does the changing of his Garment: though the new at present be not altogether so fit and suitable to his Body, yet a little use and industry will make it so.

In all things, and at all times, he is thankfull and content; and therefore manages no secret plots, no treacherous designs to advance his Fortune with the disturbing of his ease, impairing of his health, wrecking of his conscience, and denying of his God. No murmurings are heard in his Tent, and no disappointments break his rest; for vertue is his security, God his defence, and under the shadow of his wings, he lays him down in peace, and rises up with comfort.

So

So many and so great are the advantages of his private retir'd condition ; so sweet and refreshing are his enjoyments ; so easie and comfortable is his business ; so sincere is his piety , and so exalted his devotion ; that it is for the interest as well as for the ease of every man to frame his mind according to this standard , and say with the Wise-man in my Text ; *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me.*

T H E E N D.

